

Nineteenth Century English Melodrama in Context – 2016-2017

Prof. Jim Davis / 28th March- 26th April 2017 , DAMS- University of Palermo

Melodrama was one of the most popular forms of entertainment ever. Once dismissed as a meaningless example of mass culture, it has increasingly attracted critical attention in recent years. This course explores the genre, paying attention to the diversity of nineteenth-century melodrama, its changing role in society and its theatrical realization. Commencing with Gothic melodramas such as *Frankenstein* the module will also consider melodrama as a form of social protest, its representation of women, its increasing obsession with spectacle and its gradual absorption into film and television.

Schedule (all sessions are three hours long)

Session1 Introduction to Nineteenth Century Theatre & Melodrama

This seminar provides an introduction to the module and background on both nineteenth-century theatre and the genre of melodrama.

Reading for Session 2:

PRIMARY READING

Thomas Holcroft, *A Tale of Mystery* – available as an on-line resource from Google Books

M. G. Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* – available from Lacy's Play Collection <http://victorian.nuigalway.ie/modx/index.php?id=183>

SECONDARY READING

Jeffrey N. Cox, 'English Gothic Theatre' in Jerrold E. Hogle ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 125-144

Jacky Bratton, 'Romantic Melodrama' in Jane Moody & Daniel O'Quinn, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to British Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 115-127

Extract from M. G. Lewis, *The Monk* (The whole text is available on-line through Project Gutenberg and Google Books).

Session 2 Gothic Melodrama: A Tale of Mystery and The Castle Spectre

The origins of melodrama and its particular debt to the Gothic novels and plays of the eighteenth century are traced. This seminar will also place melodrama within the context of nineteenth-century theatre practices.

Reading for Session 3

R. B. Peake, *Presumption or the Fate of Frankenstein* – available as an on-line resource from the Library

H. Milner, *Frankenstein* – available as an on-line resource from Lacy's Play Collection <http://victorian.nuigalway.ie/modx/index.php?id=183>

Extracts from *Frankenstein*

Session 3: Gothic Melodrama: Frankenstein

This seminar will consider adaptations of Mary Shelley's novel and its iconic status in performance.

Reading for Session 4:

Douglas Jerrold, *Black Ey'd Susan* in George Rowell ed., *Nineteenth Century Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972); in M. R. Booth, ed., *English Plays of the Nineteenth Century 1800-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969); Google Books on-line – *The Writings of Douglas Jerrold, volume 8* Module website

John Walker, *The Factory Lad* in James L. Smith, ed., *Victorian Melodramas: Seven English, French and American Melodrama* (London: J. M. Dent, 1976); in M. R. Booth, ed., *English Plays of the Nineteenth Century 1800-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969) Module website

Jim Davis, 'British Bravery or Tars Triumphant', *New Theatre Quarterly* 4:14, May 1988

Robin Estill, 'The Factory Lad: Melodrama as Propaganda', *Theatre Quarterly* 1: 4, Oct-Dec 1971

Session 4: Melodrama and Social Protest: Black-Ey'd Susan and The Factory Lad

The early fascination of melodrama with Gothic and oriental subjects was gradually replaced by an emphasis on the domestic, the local and the patriotic. In this seminar we look at this development and at texts which highlight social and industrial issues.

Reading for Session 5

T. P. Taylor, *The Bottle, The Victorian Play Project, Worcester University* <http://victorian.nuigalway.ie/modx/index.php?id=183>

Dion Bouicault, *The Colleen Bawn* in George Rowell ed., *Nineteenth Century Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972)

Martin Meisel, *Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 124-141.

Session 5 Melodrama and Visual Spectacle: The Bottle and The Colleen Bawn

In the large theatres of the nineteenth-century melodrama exploited modern technological developments to stage some extraordinary spectacles. This seminar examines the growth in popularity of 'Sensation' Drama and the particular influence of Dion Bouicault.

Reading for Session 6

Colin Hazlewood, *Lady Audley's Secret* in George Rowell ed., *Nineteenth Century Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972)

Mrs Henry Wood, *East Lynne*

Extracts from Mary Elizabeth Braddon *Lady Audley's Secret* and Mrs Henry Wood, *East Lynne*

Martha Vicinus, 'Helpless and Unfriended': Nineteenth-Century Domestic Melodrama', *New Literary History* Vol. 13, No. 1, On Convention: 1 (Autumn, 1981), pp. 127-143 Published by: [The Johns Hopkins University Press](http://www.jstor.org/stable/468646)
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/468646>

Session 6 Women and Melodrama: Lady Audley's Secret and East Lynne

In the 1860s two sensation novels, *Lady Audley's Secret* and *East Lynne*, were adapted for the stage. This seminar examines the reasons for the popularity of these two melodramas, the relationship of the dramatizations with the novels, and the representation of the 'villainess'. It also considers the likely audiences for melodrama.

Reading for Session 7

Leopold Lewes, *The Bells* in George Rowell ed., *Nineteenth Century Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

Paul Potter, *Trilby*

George Taylor, *Players and Performances in the Victorian Theatre* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), pp. 162-72.

David Mayer, 'The Bells A Case Study', in Donohue, Joseph, ed. *The Cambridge History of British Theatre Volume 2 1660-1895*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.p. 388-404.

Session 7 Acting Melodrama: The Bells and Trilby

After a consideration of melodramatic acting and how it developed through the nineteenth century, this seminar will examine one of the great melodramatic performances of the nineteenth century, Henry Irving's Mathias in Leopold Lewes's *The Bells* and the introduction of a more psychological approach to melodramatic characterization. It also considers the growing appeal of melodrama across all social classes. This seminar will consider melodrama on film with reference to the transition of Du Maurier's novel *Trilby* from page to stage with Beerbhom Tree as Svengali and its re-emergence as a silent film.

Session 8 Melodrama Acting Workshop

This session will be devoted to a practical workshop on acting melodrama.

Session 9: Presentations

Students will prepare *in advance* group presentations of scenes from melodramas to perform and discuss in this session

Session 10: The Legacy of Melodrama

This session will be devoted to the exploration of melodrama's influence on subsequent drama and on film and television.

Reading List - Nineteenth Century Melodrama

Scanned Readings:

[black-eyed susan.pdf](#)

[frankenstein.pdf](#)

[the colleen bawn.pdf](#)

[the factory lad.pdf](#)

[Melodrama on and off the stage](#)

[broadview trilby intro.docx](#)

[broadview trilby text.docx](#)

[east lynne.pdf](#)

[lady audleys secret.pdf](#)

[helpless and unfriended.pdf](#)

[the bells.pdf](#)

As many of the primary texts are no longer in print copies will be made available, as appropriate, in advance of classes.

Primary Texts

Thomas Holcroft, *A Tale of Mystery* in Stephen Wischusen, ed., *The Hour of One: Six Gothic Melodramas* (London: Gordon Fraser Gallery, 1975); Google Books on-line

M. G. Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* in Stephen Wischusen, ed., *The Hour of One: Six Gothic Melodramas* (London: Gordon Fraser Gallery, 1975); in Jeffrey Cox, ed, *Seven Gothic Dramas, 1789-1825* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992); Google Books on-line; The Victorian Play Project, Worcester University <http://victorian.nuigalway.ie/modx/index.php?id=183>

H. Milner, *Frankenstein* in Stephen Wischusen, ed., *The Hour of One: Six Gothic Melodramas* (London: Gordon Fraser Gallery, 1975); *The Victorian Play Project*, Worcester University <http://victorian.nuigalway.ie/modx/index.php?id=183>

R. B. Peake, *Presumption or the Fate of Frankenstein* in Jeffrey Cox, ed., *Seven Gothic Dramas, 1789-1825* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992)

Douglas Jerrold, *Black Ey'd Susan* in George Rowell ed., *Nineteenth Century Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972); in M. R. Booth, ed., *English Plays of the Nineteenth Century I 1800-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969); Google Books on-line – *The Writings of Douglas Jerrold, volume 8*

John Walker, *The Factory Lad* in James L. Smith, ed., *Victorian Melodramas: Seven English, French and American Melodrama* (London: J. M. Dent, 1976); in M. R. Booth, ed., *English Plays of the Nineteenth Century I 1800-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969)

T. P. Taylor, *The Bottle*, *The Victorian Play Project*, Worcester University <http://victorian.nuigalway.ie/modx/index.php?id=183>

Dion Boucicault, *The Colleen Bawn* in George Rowell ed., *Nineteenth Century Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972)

Colin Hazlewood, *Lady Audley's Secret* in George Rowell ed., *Nineteenth Century Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972)

Mrs Henry Wood, *East Lynne*

Extracts from Mary Elizabeth Braddon *Lady Audley's Secret* and Mrs Henry Wood, *East Lynne*

Leopold Lewes, *The Bells* in George Rowell ed., *Nineteenth Century Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972)

Paul Potter, *Trilby* module website

Secondary Reading

Elaine Ashton & Ian, 'The Dangerous Woman of Melvillean Melodrama' *New Theatre Quarterly* XII:45 (February, 1996)

Clive Barker, 'The Audiences of the Britannia Theatre, Hoxton', *Theatre Quarterly* IX:34 (Summer 1979)

Michael Booth, *English Melodrama* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1975)

Michael Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)

Michael Booth, *Victorian Spectacular Theatre 1850-1910* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981)

David Bradby, Louis James & Bernard Sharratt, eds., *Performance and Politics in Popular Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980)

Jacky Bratton, Jim Cook, Christine Gledhill, eds., *Melodrama: Stage, Picture, Screen* (London: British Film Institute, 1994)

J. S. Bratton et al., *Acts of Supremacy: The British Empire and the Stage, 1790-1930* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991)

Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985)

Jim Davis, 'British Bravery or Tars Triumphant', *New Theatre Quarterly* 4:14, May 1988

Jim Davis, 'The Gospel of Rags: Melodrama at the Britannia 1863-74', *New Theatre Quarterly* 7:28 (Nov 1991)

Jim Davis & Victor Emeljanow, *Reflecting the Audience: London Theatregoing 1840-1880* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2001)

Joseph Donohue, ed., *The Cambridge History of British Theatre Volume 2 1660-1890* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

Robin Estill, 'The Factory Lad: Melodrama as Propaganda', *Theatre Quarterly* I:4, Oct-Dec 1971

Elaine Hadley, *Melodramatic Tactics: Theatricalized Dissent in the English Marketplace, 1800-1885* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995)

Michael Hays & Anastasia Nikolopoulou, eds., *Melodrama: The Cultural Emergence of a Genre* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996)

Winifred Hughes, *The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation Novels of the 1860s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980)

Russell Jackson, *Victorian Theatre* (London: A & C. Black, 1989)

Bruce McConachie, *Melodramatic Formations: American Theatre and Society 1820-1870* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1992)

David Mayer, *Henry Irving and The Bells* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980)

Martin Meisel, *Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983)

Kerry Powell, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)

James Redmond, ed., *Themes in Drama 14: Melodrama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)

Frank Rahill, *The World of Melodrama* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1967)

Paul Ranger, 'Terror and Pity reign in every Breast': *Gothic Drama in the London Patent Theatres, 1750-1820* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1991)

Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational; Cinema and its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University, 2001)

George Taylor, *Players and Performances in the Victorian Theatre* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989)

Melodrama and other Anthologies

Michael Booth, ed., *Hiss the Villain: Six English and American Melodramas* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1964)
George Rowell ed., *Nineteenth Century Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972)
James L. Smith, ed., *Victorian Melodramas: Seven English, French and American Melodrama* (London: J. M. Dent, 1976)
Stephen Wischusen, ed., *The Hour of One: Six Gothic Melodramas* (London: Gordon Fraser Gallery, 1975)